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31 July 1964

AGENCY    LANGUAGE  
TRAINING

A Decade of Experience

1954-1964

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INTRODUCTION

The Language and Area School was first organized in the Office of Training in late 1951 and early 1952 as the Language Services Division. At that time it consisted of a Chief, 3 staff instructors, 1 laboratory technician, and a clerical staff of 2. A few part-time classes began on 1 March 1952; however, the bulk of the language training which was carried out by LSD was accomplished in various external institutions, governmental and private. Much of the training was conducted under contract with

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This contractual arrangement existed until the Fall of 1953. Problems of security, expense, and lack of control of the substance of training made other methods appear desirable.

In the Fall of 1953, it was decided to shift from the previous contractual arrangements and to make fullest possible use of the language schools of other agencies of government. Students continued to attend

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Arrangements were made to send students also to the Navy Language School, the Army Language School and the National Security Agency. In addition

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a few part-time classes continued to be taught within the School. By this time the instructor staff had been increased only slightly, from 3 to 5 and the name of the school had changed to Language and External Training School.

By the Summer of 1955 it had become apparent that the use of other-agency facilities could be counted on for only a part of our training effort. Many of the cost and security problems inherent in the external contracting approach were also present in the use of other government facilities. Our policy then became one of taking full advantage of all available, suitable external programs, especially of other agencies, but simultaneously of developing our own resources to meet our needs which could not be met elsewhere with consideration for substance, cost, and security. The addition of area training occurred also in 1955 and the school was reorganized and became the Language and Area School.

The purpose of this paper is to describe and comment on the development of internal language training programs in the Language and Area School and the Agency. This process, which has been going on for about ten years, began during the experimentation period 1952-54 and has been since 1955 a significant part of the Office of Training's efforts in behalf of the professional growth of the Agency. Ten years and nearly nine thousand students appear to warrant a backward glance.

### DEVELOPMENT OF DAYTIME INSTRUCTION 1954-64

#### Class Instruction

In 1954 when the Language and Area School (then called Language and External Training School, LETS) began to expand its internal facilities, the language teaching faculty consisted of 5 staff instructors giving part-time instruction principally in French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Russian. To supplement these efforts the School was able to obtain various individuals on part-time detail from other parts of the Agency to offer classes in other languages. Classes were taught by this method in Persian, Japanese, Chinese and other languages. Full-time students were being sent to various external facilities.

In 1955, as a result of continuing expressions of interest by SR Division, it was decided to attack the problem of giving full-time instruction internally. A new staff employee was hired in July of 1955 and given the task of developing full-time instruction in Russian. Preparations for this course led to obtaining permission to hire contract instructors for the first time. The first full-time classes in Russian began in late September 1955. The success of this venture lead to further attempts in early 1956 with full-time classes beginning in French (March 1956) and German (October 1956). Since that time full-time training has been a very

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important part of our curriculum, and we have taught full-time courses in 16 languages to 350 students.

One feature of our full-time classes is at least one stay of 3-5 days

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[REDACTED] The use of such a site, where the use of the language being taught can be made compulsory on a 24-hour-per-day basis, began with the first full-time German class in 1956. At that time we made use of rented facilities. Unfortunately the third such outing, a French group, met unexpected difficulties in the form of a police raid. The activity was hastily discontinued until August 1957 when we were able to obtain our present site, [REDACTED]

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The purpose of these out-of-town training exercises is twofold: first, students are given a practical introduction under everyday living conditions of many aspects of the language which they are studying which they do not meet in the classroom; second, the experience of actually living for several days using only the foreign language is a confidence-building device which has no equal.

While the number of full-time students trained is not large, representing only about 10% of directed training and 5% of the total training effort, these courses represent much of the best training which has been done in the Agency. Individuals so trained, along with other language-proficient members of the Agency, have contributed many years

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of successful overseas service to the Agency. Out of the development of these courses have grown also the materials and the instructor-training support which have contributed indispensably to the part-time training activities of the School.

From the beginning it was apparent that full-time instruction, while necessary, would not completely satisfy the requirements of the Agency. In those schools where full-time training is the rule it has been the practice to utilize one contract instructor approximately 30 hours per week in each course. Since we were faced with requirements for both full-time and part-time classes we hit upon the scheme of using more than one instructor for each full-time class to provide variety in accent and approach for the students and to utilize the remaining time of the instructors for the teaching of part-time classes. Aside from contributing much-needed variety to our full-time classes, this system has helped greatly to keep our contract instructors at near peak performance since they are not subjected to the same class in the same room several hours per day.

The great bulk of Agency training has been done in part-time classes. Most of the part-time classes have the same objective as full-time classes; namely, spoken language proficiency along with ability to read and write. In addition to classes with general objectives a few others have been taught each year whose prime objective was the teaching of reading and translation skills. Specialized classes have consistently made up 10-20%

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of our teaching load. In the approximately ten-year period here reported LAS has trained more than five thousand students in part-time training during duty hours.

It has always been our policy, in view of the problem of security and clearability of instructors, to develop a highly professional group of contract instructors capable of handling a variety of types of instructional situations. By relying heavily on these instructors we have been able to keep the number of our staff instructors to a minimum. Our professional Staff positions now number no more than nine. To them has been left the job of planning and coordinating instruction, developing materials, and, not least, the training and professional development of contract instructors. The ultimate result of this process can be seen in the support which the daytime program has been able to give to the Voluntary and Tutorial Programs in terms of materials and instructor training, without which it would have been difficult or impossible to run the programs. In addition to the support of headquarters programs we are able to supply tapes and texts to support language training activities in the field. Hundreds of man-hours per year are devoted to this activity. Our present faculty numbers nine staff instructors, and eighteen full-time and four part-time contract instructors.

In addition to actual teaching the staff has produced a number of highly professional and usable materials for language teaching. These

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materials and the accompanying tape recordings are the distillation of years of experience in practical language teaching. Many of our materials are equal or superior to many which have been highly praised and widely used in the profession. Materials production is not a one-time affair, it is a continuous process of applying lessons learned and new discoveries in the field of language teaching to our definition of our mission: "It is our job to apply our experience and skill to the language training requirements of the Agency in the most professional way possible under the circumstances."

### Tutorial Instruction

In January 1960 the decision was made to supplement our normal training facilities by setting up a roster of language tutors, in as many languages as possible, who would be ready to give tutorial instruction on short notice to students who for various reasons could not be fitted into regular IAS classes. Many such students were still being given training at commercial schools in the area at costs which were excessive. By recruiting primarily wives of staff employees of the Agency it was also hoped that the security of such training could be improved. The two principal categories of students in tutorial training were: (1) those who for reasons of scheduling or other reasons could not be trained in regular classes, or (2) employees in covert status who could not enter Agency premises.



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The first tutors were cleared, and hired on hourly rate contracts, early in February 1960 and by May 1960 tutorial instruction had been given to some 40 students.

The program grew rapidly until early in FY 1964. Between 85 and 100 students were in tutorial training at any one time. This was a result of increasing Agency reliance, particularly by DDP, on the easily available tutorial training, which made advance planning for language training practically unnecessary. The availability of a large cadre of native speakers soon became well known throughout the Agency, and their services were frequently requested for other activities such as the following:

1. Assisting in the DDP/Systems Groups (formerly HCU) Name Grouping Project. About 15 to 20 tutors have assisted in this project since it began early in 1961.
2. Assisting in transliteration projects for RID and other Agency offices.
3. Translation assignments.
4. Testing language proficiency of staff and contract agents off Agency premises.
5. On a few occasions, acting as interpreters at debriefings.

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As the tutorial rush increased in volume, the peak was reached in April 1963 when the cost of tutorial training for one month reached \$8,225, and it remained until August 1963.

In August it became impossible for the Office of Training to budget money for tutorial training and for a period of several months tutorial training was to be charged directly to the using component. At the same time the School made every effort to increase services by combining tutorials into small classes and by scheduling regular Spanish and French classes to begin on the first of each month. By doing this we have been able to service many requests that would previously have been purely tutorial using our regular staff and using tutors only to make up the hours which could not be handled by the regular staff. As a result the number of tutorials for FY 1964 dropped by 100 below the number for the preceding year and the number of tutorials in progress at any given time is between 30 and 40. The cost of the program has leveled off to approximately \$4,500 per month.

About 800 students have received tutorial training since the beginning of the program. A fairly large number of these students, particularly during 1961 and 1962, were trained for ludicrously short periods, i.e., from 5 to 25 hours. Approximately 75% of tutorial trainees have been from DDP with the remaining 25% from other Agency components. Since the program began, we have employed a total of 100 tutors who have given instruction in 26 languages. An additional 53 were cleared, but their services were never required.

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There is little doubt that the advent of tutorial training has increased the flexibility and capabilities of the School. At present we have a total capability of 49 languages in which instruction can be given, plus English teaching and covert training capabilities.

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THE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM 1957-63

The Language Awards Program

The Language Development Program, with its central feature, the Language Awards Program, was planned in 1955 and 1956 and went into effect on 4 February 1957. This was an event of signal importance for the Language and Area School. It placed upon the School a number of sharpened demands for services both in teaching and non-teaching fields.

The Awards Program was conceived in the knowledge that other intelligence services pay bonuses for language proficiency. The architects of the program began with the mandate that the awards to be paid under the program were to be paid not for possession of the skill but rather for the expenditure of effort involved in acquiring and maintaining the proficiency. The attempt to write this notion into the implementing regulations and to apply the principles of language difficulty and manner of acquisition and maintenance to the adjudication of cases occasioned much difficulty during the years that the Awards Program was in force. Major emphasis was placed on off-duty acquisition of language competence. During the six years in which the Awards Program was in force, approximately \$765,500 was paid out in awards. Nearly 4000 individuals

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participated in the program. Nearly 2500 awards were paid for acquisition of new skills and over 3000 awards were paid for maintenance of skills previously acquired.

There appears to be no question that the Language Development Program contributed materially in a general way to the development of language proficiency in the Agency. It is significant that maximum enrollments in LAS programs of training were registered in those years (FY 58 and 59) in which the most money was paid out in awards. Opportunities offered under the Language Development Program for voluntary study of foreign languages almost doubled the total number of people enrolled in language training.

With its emphasis on voluntary learning of language and with the administrative and budgetary limitation under which the Awards program operated it was almost inevitable that it should have fallen somewhat short of the expectations which many held for it. There is room for speculation that the same expenditure of funds and supervision applied to a sharply-focussed, workable, overall policy with respect to language training in the Agency might have produced superior results, particularly if such a policy had made it possible to train a small number of carefully selected individuals in less common, but critical languages, such as Vietnamese, Cambodian, etc.

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Voluntary Language Training Program (1957- )

The training offspring of the Language Development Program was the Voluntary Language Training Program which began in May 1957. The Language Development Program offered graduated awards depending upon the relative difficulty of languages and the circumstances under which the languages were learned (i.e., whether they were learned as a result of directed training during duty hours or as a result of voluntary study on the students' own time.) It became immediately apparent that opportunities for learning foreign languages would have to be afforded to those members of the Agency for whom directed training during normal duty hours could not be justified. A study was undertaken by the Language and Area School to determine the most efficient and satisfactory ways of providing this training. Among the alternatives considered were:

1. Contracting with an external institution to give off-duty hours training for selected Agency students.
2. Contracting for instructors to provide training on Agency premises during off-duty hours.
3. Recruitment of instructors from among Agency personnel with the necessary linguistic qualifications.

The latter method proved to be the most satisfactory from the point of view of cost, security and flexibility, (and control of substance and

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teaching practices.) It also provided the additional advantage of affording an opportunity for many highly skilled members of the Agency to maintain their proficiency in various foreign languages by acting as instructors in the Program. As it turned out, one of the incidental advantages accrued from the fact that many of the instructors were themselves supervisors in the Agency, and they derived from teaching in the Program a thorough understanding of the problems of language teaching in the Agency. The language classes in the Voluntary Program were conceived as regular classes to be taught on a definite schedule with a definite curriculum, building through a series of part-time classes up to usable proficiencies in terms of Agency proficiency standards. The support for this Program in terms of instructor training, provision of materials, and administrative support was provided by the regular staff of the Language and Area School.

During the first two years of its existence the Voluntary Language Training Program was organized in 3 trimesters per year. First classes began on 20 May 1957 with 170 students in 20 classes in seven languages. By the sixth trimester in the Winter of 1959 we had achieved a high point of 61 classes in 16 languages with an enrollment of 372. The highest point in enrollment came in the Fall-Winter semester of 1959-60 with 430 students.

In the Spring of 1960 it was decided to eliminate basic-level classes in French, German, Italian and Spanish because extremely high enrollments in these languages made it appear useful to attempt to entice students to take up less common languages. The result was a drop in enrollment to 237 in 30 classes in 10 languages.

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The situation remained thus until Spring of 1961 when the pressure of demands for out-of-hours basic level classes in common languages caused the reinstatement of these courses in the curriculum. As these courses were reinstated it was recognized that it was desirable to make the transfer from a first or second course in the Voluntary Program into an advanced class in the Daytime Program as easy as possible, since the VLTP was destined to become a basic training ground for many of our students. We therefore introduced into all basic VLTP classes as rapidly as possible the same texts which are being used in regular daytime classes. By now all basic level classes use the same texts as Daytime classes. Since the reinstatement of basic classes in the common languages, enrollments have climbed slightly, but never to the peaks which we experienced in the early days of the program. The present semester has an enrollment of 204 in 25 classes in five languages.

During the 16 semesters (or trimesters) of the Voluntary Language Training Program there have been 4117 student enrollments in 583 classes in 20 languages. This represents about 2700 individual students allowing for the fact that about one-third of the students enrolled for two or more semesters. Of the 2700 individuals about 12% have gone straight through a sequence of courses, have taken a proficiency test, and almost all have registered an immediately useful level of proficiency. Approximately 25% drop out of the program with unsatisfactory performance, attendance, or both. The remaining 63% drop out of the program before finishing a complete sequence of courses, but after achieving a significant start in the language. Our present records and follow-up system are not

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equal to the task of keeping track of all of these people. A significant number either go into more intensive training, depart PCS for overseas and show up later with a useful proficiency in the language or may later reappear to continue where they left off. There is reason to believe that as many as half of these people do eventually achieve fully usable proficiencies. The remainder have at least a start in the language which would cut down on the lead time necessary to train them to full proficiency if the occasion arose.

Thus while the Voluntary Program has not lived up to the hopes which many people held for it, it has probably succeeded both in terms of a not inconsiderable number of useful proficiencies and in terms of a potential which we cannot yet precisely measure.

When the cost of the Voluntary Program — approximately \$35,000 per year — is reckoned, it is simple to leave out of consideration the support provided to the Program in terms of instructor training and provision of usable and practical teaching materials by the daytime program. Without the support of the daytime program, the Voluntary Program would virtually not have been possible. In return for its efforts, however, the daytime program has gained from the Voluntary Program an insight into various aspects of language training problems which could not be studied as thoroughly in connection with the rather less regular and more harried schedule of the daytime program. The statistics on student aptitudes, attitudes, proficiencies developed

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and teaching techniques which we have gained from experimentation and careful records-keeping in the Voluntary Program have been of direct help to the daytime program where the opportunity for experimentation was minimal in view of the constant struggle to do the best possible job in the least possible time. Thus, the 2 programs have in many respects complemented each other and the 2 together have been able to accomplish more than either would have been able to accomplish alone.

### Foreign Language Proficiency Testing

The need for wide-range foreign language proficiency testing had been foreshadowed in 1955 with the establishment of some experimental proficiency tests done originally at the request of TSS.

Moreover, there was increasing desire to develop a realistic inventory of the Agency's foreign language assets and recognition that the existing self-evaluations provided on "application for employment" forms were fallible and unreliable. As there was increasing concern in the Agency for language competence as an operational tool and for ascertaining that an officer truly possessed the desired facility, objective evaluation of proficiency became an essential instrument for selection and assignment of personnel.

The coming of the language awards program made it imperative that methods be found to conduct large numbers of proficiency tests with a

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reasonable degree of standardization. This small program beginning in connection with testing the Slavic language proficiencies of TSS employees therefore expanded into a considerable amount of research in broad-range proficiency testing which we found to our surprise was rather unique in the language teaching field in the United States. Although beginnings in oral testing had been made at the Foreign Service Institute, we found that there was absolutely no reliable guidance to be had in this field. The only existing tests which we were able to find were the Army's so-called proficiency tests which were exclusively devoted to written language and suffer from many other inadequacies. Such information as we were able to obtain came from [REDACTED] who was already employed as a consultant to the A&E Staff. In several conferences with [REDACTED] we developed a number of guiding principles concerning the types of tests which would be required. Prototype tests were composed first in German and then in French, which tests eventually formed the basis for the objective tests in 34 languages which were composed with the aid of language-proficient members of the Agency and contract employees under the guidance of an LAS staff member, beginning with the end of 1955. The tests which ultimately resulted from this research were the first and only serious attempts in the field to judge as accurately as possible the abilities of individuals in speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation and understanding, measured against the standard of a native speaker of the language concerned. Understandably these tests have shown over a period of time many deficiencies and shortcomings. Nevertheless, they still stand as milestones in the development of the foreign language field.


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Testing began in 1957 and rose to a peak at the height of the Language Awards Program in 1959 and 1960. After that, the number of candidates declined in direct proportion to the number of reductions in monetary awards. Oral testing to accompany the written tests has been conducted by interviewing candidates with the aid of volunteer help from language-proficient members of the Agency.

In all, over 10,000 tests have been administered by the testing section. In spite of this the Agency's Language Qualification Register remains one of the darkest corners of the Language Development Program. Of the thousands of claimed proficiencies only about 35-40% have been verified by tests. Although the regulation requires periodic testing of proficiency, it has proven impracticable to find means of administering tests overseas, and compliance at headquarters, in spite of repeated attempts, has not been obtained.

With the advent of the National Defense Education Act of 1958, new experiments were undertaken by the Research Center of the Modern Language Association to produce tests of linguistic proficiency in 5 common languages. As a result of interagency cooperation developed in the Inter-agency Language Round Table, which will be discussed in another context, it was possible to begin with year-end funds for Fiscal Year 1962 a contract



French and Spanish. Since the launching of the original contract, funds provided by the Defense Language Institute have enabled us to amend the contract to include 2 forms of the test in Russian, which is presently in production. The contract for the French and Spanish tests terminated as of 30 June 1964, and while the resulting tests have not been fully evaluated as yet, they give promise of a more objective standard of measure of foreign language proficiency than we have had heretofore, and it is hoped that these tests can be adopted as a government-wide standard, meaningful also to the academic community for the measuring of linguistic proficiency.

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### INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

In 1956 the Chief of the Language and Area School called the first meeting of the Interagency Language Round Table, which was to be an informal, approximately monthly meeting of heads of language training facilities in Government agencies for the purpose of exchanging usable information on facilities, personnel and aids in the field of language training. The organization of the Round Table was purposely kept informal with the rotating chairmanship determined voluntarily at each of the monthly meetings. Much emphasis was placed on the understanding of common problems and recently on common solutions to these problems.

Through the Round Table, Agency representatives were able to know of and use the language courses of other agencies, resulting in significant monetary savings for the Agency. Contacts have also been made recently by this group with the academic community. The result has been widespread dissemination of information on language training problems and techniques which has resulted in minimizing duplication among Government facilities, general agreement on salary scales to be paid to language instructors, general agreement on standards for language proficiency, and

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possible agreement on measures of language aptitude. At present members of the Round Table are engaged in a project aimed at formulating lists of languages for which training requirements exist and for which training materials are not yet developed, with suggested priorities for the development of materials. Once priorities are agreed upon, the Center for Applied Linguistics of the Modern Language Association, with help from the Ford Foundation, may take over the job of setting down information about existing materials with professional annotation as to the quality of the materials.

The Center for Applied Linguistics is also launching a project for setting up a clearing house for information on and evaluation of automated teaching aids in the field of language training. It is hoped that inter-agency support can be obtained for this extremely worthwhile project.

There are many other problems in the field which can only be solved, if at all, by the type of cooperation which has been developed as a result of the Interagency Round Table.

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## THE FUTURE OF AGENCY LANGUAGE TRAINING

### Methods

The coming of the oral-aural approach to language training and the use of the language laboratory have given great impetus to foreign language study. The present oral-aural method promises useful results, but it still requires inordinate amounts of time. The language laboratory is the first step in the automation of many aspects of language training. Present materials used in the lab, though considerably refined by comparison with those of ten years ago, are still relatively crude. Experimentation in learning theory which has been in progress for some years shows the way to more refined and more fully automated methods of teaching which give promise of allowing the individual to progress at his own rate and much more thoroughly than was previously believed possible.

Although initial claims by proponents of programed instruction have proven to be exaggerated, the principles of programed teaching are already well established. The working out of specific techniques for teaching specific skills and the development of the necessary means of exploiting the principles will undoubtedly be a longer process. Be that as it may, the prospect of significant breakthroughs in this area are extremely



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bright in the coming ten years. The cost of these breakthroughs will be very high and it is important that developments be followed closely and examined critically at every step of the way. The best hope of being able to accomplish this without premature commitment and profligate waste of resources appears to lie in the cooperative approach among agencies, as accomplished by the Round Table. Through this approach access can be had to tested new developments at a minimum cost to each organization. As the proposal to set up a clearing house for information on automated instructional materials briefly outlined above becomes more firmly established, a proposal for modest financial support by the Agency will be made. It is hoped that conditions will permit the Agency to support the project.

#### Language Training Policy

Short of the brave new world of automated teaching described above and in spite of the not inconsiderable accomplishments of the past ten years, the best means by which the Agency can guarantee its linguistic future is to establish policy through which it can forecast its requirements with sufficient accuracy so that it may plan to fill them with the resources which it already possesses, or train in as orderly a fashion as possible the necessary persons to make up deficits. The efficacy of such an approach will probably be amply demonstrated in the Armed Forces and in State and USIA where such policies are presently being implemented.

The problem of obtaining such a policy is not one which properly belongs exclusively within the concern of the Office of Training, although

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OTR has been in the forefront in demanding such a policy. One of the stumbling blocks has been that much of the information on personnel, their skills, and their utilization necessary to the formulation of an intelligent proposal for a policy has not been readily available to the Office of Training. Furthermore, suggestions leading to the obtaining of this information and the formulation of a policy proposal have been tarred with the brush of "vested interest" when they emanated from the Office of Training.

On sober consideration much of the responsibility for the type of personnel planning implied by the idea of a language policy appears to lie with the Office of Personnel. Recently the Director of Personnel has instructed members of his staff to look into the State-USIA policy on language proficiency with a view to its implications for the Agency. Thus far we have cooperated with the Office of Personnel by providing as much information as possible on the State-USIA policy. This approach through the Office of Personnel appears to have promise and it is devoutly hoped that they will not meet with the same obstacles which we have encountered in the past.

IAS LANGUAGE TRAININGSTATISTICS\*

<u>FY</u>	<u>Daytime Training</u>		<u>VLTP</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>Class</u>	<u>Tutorial</u>		
1955	478			478
1956	413			413
1957	515			515
1958	516		589	1105
1959	497		635	1132
1960	457	42	574	1073
1961	460	156	389	1005
1962	505	234	335	1074
1963	477	224	379	1080
1964	<u>470</u>	<u>132</u>	<u>323</u>	<u>925</u>
	4788	788	3224	8800

\*These figures do not represent total enrollments. They represent all students who completed a substantial segment of a course.

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